

Item 4f **13/00033/FUL**

Case Officer **Matthew Banks**

Ward **Heath Charnock And Rivington**

Proposal **Retrospective application for the temporary siting of a static caravan for living accommodation and the creation of associated hardstanding.**

Location **Middle Derbyshire Farm Rivington Lane Rivington Bolton BL6 7RX**

Applicant **Mr David Dalton**

Consultation expiry: **19 February 2013**

Application expiry: **22 March 2013**

Proposal

1. Retrospective application for the temporary siting of a static caravan for living accommodation and the creation of associated hardstanding.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that this application is refused.

Main Issues

3. The main issues for consideration in respect of this planning application are:
 - Principle of the development;
 - Design and impact on the streetscene;
 - Impact on neighbour amenity;
 - Impact on highways/access;
 - Impact on ecology.

Representations

4. To date 1no. letter of objection and 1no. letter of support have been received concerning this application.
5. The letter of objection can be summarised as follows:
 - In other cases, caravans in Rivington have remained on site with associated materials for many years. It therefore would be useful to ensure the caravan and associated 'metal boxes etc.' are removed from site after a time period by planning condition.
6. The letter of support can be summarised as follows:
 - The applicant acquired Middle Derbyshire's Farm in October 2012 and was alarmed at the condition of building;
 - Surveys were carried out by an appropriately qualified structural engineer who advised the controlled demolition of the farmhouse and associated buildings due to their structural stability and health and safety risks;
 - Demolition of the building took place on the 15th October 2012;
 - An application for a replacement dwelling will be submitted in the next five days;
 - The rationale for the temporary mobile home relates to the fact that the applicant purchased the property in good faith as a dwellinghouse, however, had to demolish it based on real health and safety concerns;
 - The mobile home is required as a temporary measure;
 - Steven Abbott Associates LLP have been directly involved in a number of cases of this type where planning permission is sought for a replacement dwelling in the Green Belt, but

in circumstances where the original dwelling/building has had to be removed or demolished;

- The legal position around such cases is often complex and uncertain. Issues around abandonment and loss of long established use rights can arise in such cases;
- The structural issues only became apparent once the applicant could assess the actual condition of the buildings after the previous owner/occupier vacated the property in October 2012;
- The recent occupation is also relevant in considering abandonment issues;
- Following the decision to undertake the controlled demolition in mid-October 2012, the applicant sought immediate engagement with officers of the LPA to discuss how proposals for rebuilding the property could be achieved which took place on the 30th November 2012;
- Decision makers have the ability to take a pragmatic and sensible approach to such cases based on site specific circumstances;
- Strong arguments can be advanced under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights where refusal of permission for rebuilding or replacement may have impacts on the right to family life and home;
- The full planning application will be supported by information about various cases where similar issues have arisen;
- The applicant's requirement for basic living accommodation on site during the planning and construction phases should be noted;
- Steven Abbott Associates LLP are aware of numerous examples where a temporary consent has been issued for a mobile home on a site where development of a permanent house is to take place;
- There are matters of timing involved with this case, but that should not affect the matters to be taken into account.

Consultations

7. **The Coal Authority** – standing advice
8. **Parish Council** – none received
9. **Lancashire County Council Ecology Service** – none received
10. **CBC Planning Policy Advice** – none received

Assessment

Principle of the development

11. The application site is within the Green Belt and so the relevant guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework (the framework) and Policy DC1 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review applies. These policies prescribe certain types of development which can be considered appropriate within the Green Belt. Where development does not fall within the appropriate types of development, the framework states that it must be inappropriate development by definition. The framework goes further to state that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
12. The framework also states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
13. This application seeks retrospective planning permission for the temporary siting of a static caravan for living accommodation and the creation of associated hardstanding, the former of which does not fall within one of the appropriate types of development as listed in the framework or local plan policy DC1.

14. The development is therefore inappropriate development by definition and the test is whether any very special circumstances have been presented by the applicant to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.
15. In terms of the current application, the applicant's supporting statement indicates that the caravan is required during pre-planning stage and the construction of a new dwelling in place of the property which was recently demolished. However, although involved in pre-planning discussions, the Council is not in receipt of a formal application for a new dwelling at the site and so it is considered only very limited weight should be attributed to these circumstances in justifying the development. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that a future application will come forward for consideration and the acceptability of such an application cannot be pre-determined.
16. In addition, it is also noted that the applicant's personal circumstances have progressed and they are now looking to move to the site as their contract on a rented property has recently come to a close. The applicant states that it is uneconomic to both rent a house and pay for a mortgage. However, whilst this situation is unfortunate, it is not considered to amount to very special circumstances sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.
17. It has been noted that a supporting statement has been submitted by Steven Abbott Associates LLP which attempts to justify the development. However, it is considered that the majority of the supporting statement relates to a future application to be submitted for a new dwelling at the site (which has not yet been received by the Council). The remainder of the statement, in essence, states that due to unfortunate circumstances, the applicant has no place to live. However, this is not considered to amount to a case for very special circumstances sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt in this case.
18. As such, in view of inappropriate development, the proposal is considered to be contrary to the guidance in the framework and Policy DC1 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.
19. In addition to the above, it is also relevant to consider the impact of the development in relation to the openness of the Green Belt. The framework states that the openness of a Green Belt is one of its most important attributes and any impact on openness should be considered as part of a planning application.
20. The caravan is sited to the western portion of the site, within close proximity to Rivington Lane. In recent months the site has been cleared of the former dwelling, adjoining barn, many of the associated outbuildings and some of the trees and foliage surrounding the site. This has made the site more visible from the streetscene, particularly when viewed from the north and south from Rivington Lane. However, the application site is at a higher land level than Rivington Lane (approximately 1m higher) and is shielded to the west (immediately fronting Rivington Lane) by an established tree line including low level shrubbery. This in part, shields the development from the streetscene.
21. The caravan itself is standard in size, is not excessive in height and so does not appear overly visible or prominent. It is therefore not considered the resulting impact on the openness of the Green Belt is so severe to warrant refusal of the application on these grounds.
22. The associated hardstanding has been laid immediately surrounding the caravan, however in terms of visual impact on the surrounding area and given the untidy character of the site (following demolition of the former house and barn), it is not considered this element of the proposal would impact on the openness of the Green Belt to such a degree to warrant refusal of the application on these grounds. Furthermore, it should be noted that the framework states that engineering operations are not inappropriate development provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt.

23. As such, although it is not considered a refusal of the application could be sustained in relation to the impact on the openness of the Green Belt, the siting of a caravan is inappropriate development. In view of insufficient very special circumstances to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, the development is contrary to the guidance in the framework and Policy DC1 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.

Design and impact on the streetscene

24. At a national level the framework states that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.
25. The framework also states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments (amongst other things) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development; establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit and; respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.
26. Policy 17 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy states that the design of new buildings will be expected to take account of the character and appearance of the local area, including (amongst other things) the siting, layout, massing, scale, design, materials and landscaping. Development should also safeguard and enhance the built environment.
27. Policy GN5 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review states that the design of proposed developments will be expected to be well related to their surroundings. Applicants are expected to demonstrate that they have followed a methodology which sets out the design principles adopted, and have carried out a full survey of the site and its surroundings. Applicants should propose a design which is specific to the site including (amongst other things) the height, bulk and roof shape; external facing materials; layout and levels.
28. The applicant states the caravan would be sited on the land for a temporary period during pre-planning discussions or upon first occupation of a newly constructed dwelling. The caravan has already been sited on the land and is substantial in size.
29. In terms of impact on the streetscene, it has been established that some of the site has been cleared of natural screening which is predominately to the north, east and southern site boundaries. However, the site remains somewhat screened from Rivington Lane which comprises the main streetscene view of the site.
30. The site itself is set at a higher level than the road and being partially screened, means the caravan does not appear overly visible or prominent from within the streetscene. The caravan has a standard appearance and so is not excessive in height. Furthermore, the caravan has only applied for on a temporary basis and so would not have a prolonged impact on the character area. As such, it is not considered a refusal of the application could be sustained in respect of the impact on the streetscene.

Impact on the neighbour amenity

31. At a national level, the framework states within one of its twelve core planning principles that planning should always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.
32. Policy 17 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy states that the design of new development should take account of the character and appearance of the local area, including ensuring that the amenities of occupiers of the development will not be adversely affected by neighbouring uses and vice versa. The Central Lancashire Core Strategy also states that development should be sympathetic to surrounding land uses and occupiers, and should not result in demonstrable harm to the amenities of the local area.

33. The application site sits removed from nearby residential properties, with the closest residential properties Pall Mall Cottages to the north and Rivington Park Independent School to the south. However, both these properties are over 100m from the application site and so are not materially affected by the development.
34. A single neighbour letter has been received in relation to this application, however, the concerns raised relate to the principle of the development rather than specific neighbour amenity issues.
35. As such, it is not considered the proposed development would result in any significant detrimental harm to the amenity of neighbouring residents to warrant refusal of the application on these grounds.

Impact on highways/access

36. The application site once comprised a dwelling, adjoining barn and associated outbuildings which were served from Rivington Lane via an existing vehicular access. The access itself has been unchanged as a result of the development and would solely serve the caravan on site.
37. Given the access recently served a dwelling, it is not considered the proposal would result in any greater demand for access improvements. In terms of off-road parking, the development incorporates an area of hardstanding immediately surrounding the caravan which provides adequate space to park a number of vehicles.
38. As such, the development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy TR4 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.

Impact on Ecology

39. Policy EP4 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review states that planning permission should not be granted for development which would have an adverse effect on protected species. As such, as part of the application Lancashire County Council (LCC) Ecology have been consulted to provide specialist advice concerning the potential impact on protected species as a result of the proposed development and associated works, specifically concerning bats, amphibians and nesting birds.
40. Policy EP2 states that development likely to have an adverse effect on a Biological Heritage Site will not be permitted unless the reasons for the development are sufficient to override the nature conservation considerations.
41. The application site was previously occupied by a dwelling, adjoining barn and outbuildings. The site has now been cleared and vegetation removed to leave a relatively level site. The site is surrounded by Lever Park Biological Heritage Site (BHS) to all boundaries which provides a habitat predominately for birds.
42. The caravan and hardstanding are sited to the west of the site, within close proximity to Rivington Lane. Therefore, in terms of the impact on protected species, it is considered that given the extensive site clearance works recently undertaken, there is only a very limited likelihood that the development would result in any significant harm to protected species.
43. In terms of the impact on the BHS, it should be noted that the application site recently formed the domestic curtilage of Middle Derbyshire Farm, having more of a domesticated character rather than the open fields surrounding the site. It is therefore not considered the development would result in any significant detrimental harm to the BHS being sited firmly within the site and not directly affect habitats of known ecological importance.
44. The development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policies EP2 and EP4 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review 2003.

Overall Conclusion

45. The sited caravan constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in 'very special circumstances'. No such 'very special circumstances' have been submitted in support of the application to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness. As such, the development is contrary to guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy DC1 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.
46. On the basis of the above, the application is accordingly recommended for refusal.

Planning Policies

National Planning Policy Framework

Central Lancashire Core Strategy Policy 17

Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review Policies DC1, GN5, TR4, EP2 and EP4

Planning History

The site history of the property is as follows:

Ref: 87/00866/FUL **Decision:** REFFPP **Decision Date:** 12 April 1988
Description: Alterations and extensions to enable change of use to country hotel and restaurant with associated car parking

Ref: 80/00597/FUL **Decision:** PD **Decision Date:** 3 June 1980
Description: Change of Use: Storage building to outside toilet

Ref: 78/01238/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 30 April 1979
Description: Temporary works depot for use by M.S.C. STEP, comprising sheds, caravans and toilet accommodation

Ref: 76/00429/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 15 June 1976
Description: Alterations to provide warden's accommodation and office

Application Number – 13/00033/FUL

- Retrospective application for the temporary siting of a static caravan for living accommodation and the creation of associated hardstanding.
- Refuse
- 22 March 2013

Recommendation: Refuse Full Planning Permission **Reasons**

1. **The sited caravan constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in 'very special circumstances'. The case presented in support of the application is not considered to amount to a case of 'very special circumstances' sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness. Therefore, the development is contrary to guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy DC1 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review 2003.**